# SOME USEFUL PHRASES IN TIBETAN

## विष्णिणिणिण्या

[tʃɑ͡ʃi tɛ lɛ] /tra shi dé lek./ *Hello*.

#### क्रार(जिए) प्रमुख्य

[kheran kusu tepo jin pe] /khyé rang kusu dé po yin pé?/ How are you?

#### (विशिधाधिव।

[na tεpo jin]
/nga dé po yin./ *I'm fine*.

# ું હો! ત્રાં ના તાલુક તે કાર્યા તાલુક તે કાર્યા કા

[kheran ki tshen la khare Ju ki jø] /khyé rang gi tsen la ga ré zhu gi yö?/ What is your name?

# (गेर्विशाण द्वा ब्रेस्कोष्णा

[ŋɛ miŋla ʤan rɛ ki jø]
/ngé ming la John zer gi yö./
My name is John.

#### 

[kheran khane jin] /khyé rang ga né yin?/ Where are you from?

## (ા ... વર્ષાણવા

[ŋa ... nɛ jin] /nga ... né yin./ I'm from ...

#### डिंगार्डिका

[thu dʒɛ tʃhɛ] /tuk jé ché./
Thank you.

### Eniminatulmill

[dʒɛma dʒjɛ•joŋ] /jé ma jel yong./ Goodbye.

# FIVE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD LEARN MORE ABOUT TIBETAN AND THEIR LANGUAGE

- 1. The Tibetan population is estimated to be about 6.5 million, and can be found mostly in China, India, and Nepal.
- 2. A member of the Tibetao-Burman language group, Standard Tibetan shares many structural similarities to other Tibetao-Burman languages, including Burmese.
- 3. The whole of Tibet, including the U-Tsang, Kham, and Amdo provinces, spans over 976,000 square miles across Asia and has an overage altitude of 13,000 feet above sea level.
- 4. Commonly called the "Roof of the World," Tibet is home to the Himalayan mountain range featuring Mount Everest which at 29,029 feet above sea level is the highest mountain in the world.
- 5. Tibet is the source of many of Asia's largest rivers (including the Yangtze, Yellow, Mekong, Salween, and Tsangpo) and provides water for over one billion people.

#### ABOUT US

The Center for Languages of the Central Asian Region (CeLCAR) at Indiana University develops materials for learning and teaching a wide variety of Central Asian languages.

For more information, go to celcar.indiana.edu.



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# TIBETAN



Center for Languages of the Central Asian Region (CeLCAR)

# WHO ARE THE TIBETANS AND WHERE DO THEY LIVE?

The Tibetan people, or Tibetans, are an ethnic group native to a region in Asia that spans over 976,000 square miles, including the Sichuan,

Qinghai, Gansu, and Yunnan provinces of the People's Republic of China. What many people now refer to as Tibet, also known as the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), is actually just a portion of Tibet (463,000 sq mi made up of U-Tsang and a small portion of Kham). TAR is a plateau region just north of the Himalayan Mountain ranges, and is just south of China's Xinjiang Autonomous Region, southwest of Qinghia, and west of Sichaun. TAR also shares international borders to its west and south with India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Myanmar.

Today, the Tibetan population is estimated to be about 6.5 million with approximately 6.2 million living in China, significant populations in India (190,000), Nepal (60,000), and smaller, but still significant populations of Tibetans living in Australia, Bhutan, Canada, Taiwan, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

#### WHAT KIND OF LANGUAGE IS TIBETANT

Standard Tibetan, also known as Lhasa Tibetan, belongs to the Bodic branch of the Western Tibeto-Burman group of languages within the larger Sino-Tibetan language family. The Sino-Tibetan language family includes more than 400 varieties of language spoken by over 1.3 billion people throughout Asia, including Chinese, and the Tibeto-Burmese subgroup includes Burmese,

and the Tibetic languages. Tibetan languages are typically broken down into seven major dialects: Central Tibetan (basis of Standard Tibetan), Northern Tibetan, Southern Tibetan, Western Archaic Tibetan, Western Innovative Tibetans, Amdo Tibetan, and Khams Tibetan.

Tibetan nouns and verbs tend to be monosyllabic and many dialects, including Standard Tibetan, use two tones (high and low) to differentiate in lexical and grammatical meaning between the sounds. Tibetan is an ergative language (meaning the direct object of transitive verbs use the same form as the



subject of intransitive verbs) and uses a subject-object-verb word order. Another linguistic feature that Tibetan languages shares with other Sino-Tibetan languages is the lack of articles, definite or indefinite.

### WHAT ALPHABET DO THE TIBETAN USE?

Since the 7th century, Tibetan has been written using the Uchen script, a block style script modeled on the Devanāgarī alphabet, which is most commonly used to write Indian languages. The Tibetan alphabet is made up of thirty basic letters and is written left to right in horizontal lines, similar to Romanized alphabets. However, unlike Roman alphabets, each letter in the Tibetan alphabet represents a consonant-vowel sound unit.

Similar to Arabic, the Tibetan alphabet also uses diacritics in order to change

the sound value of the letters.

#### WHAT IS TIBETAN CULTURE LIKE

For many centuries, Tibetan culture has been influenced by the cultures of neighboring countries, such as Nepal, India, and China. However, the greatest influence on



Tibetan culture has been Buddhism, which has been the main religion of the region since the 7th century.

Art plays a key role in Tibetan culture. Tibetan craftsmen practice an array of artistic styles, including painting, carvings, and weaving on a variety of mediums. Furthermore, Tibetan art most traditionally reflects the religious beliefs of the culture.

Tibetan cuisine is influenced by the livestock and crops of the region. Many dishes feature goat, yak, or mutton meat, and dairy products such as yogurt, butter, and cheese are made from yak or goat milk. Staple crops include barley and rice, which are used make noodles, dumplings, and breads. Some traditional Tibetan dishes include *tsampa* (roasted barley), *Sha Phaley* (meat and cabbage in bread), *thukpa* (a noodle dish with vegetables and meat), and a traditional Tibetan dessert is *thue*, which is made from dried yak cheese, brown sugar, and butter.

Most Tibetans enjoy drinking tea, with yak butter tea or jasmine tea being among their favorites varieties.

